

a how to guide for stealing bread and learning trust

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a how to guide for stealing bread and learning trust

by [bonesandthebees \(bonesandcacti\)](#)

Summary

“Hey mate!” The guy called out as he got closer, giving Wilbur a friendly smile. “I think you dropped your bread.”

Wilbur should run the opposite direction from this guy, but he didn't seem angry at him. If anything, the guy was holding the bread towards him, like he was waiting for Wilbur to take it back.

He didn't trust that. It had to be some kind of test.

“It's not my bread. I stole it,” Wilbur said without preamble, narrowing his eyes at the guy who was standing only a few feet away from him now.

The guy shrugged, still holding the bread out. “Yeah, but it's not like that baker was gonna be able to sell it after it got all squished, so it's as good as yours.”

or, runaway Wilbur runs into a friendly man while trying to steal some bread. Somehow this snowballs into him getting a new dad.

or or, the backstory for how Wilbur got adopted by Phil in tommyinnit's clinic for supervillains! ft: slowly re-learning how to trust people, a 26 year old Phil who really didn't intend to adopt a kid but somehow bonded with this 12 year old anyway, and cameos from some of your favorite clinic side characters.

Notes

it's finally here! the promised siren backstory!

now a few things I wanna clarify right off the bat: the only members of SBI you're going to see in this fic are Wilbur and Phil. this story is only about how Phil first adopted Wilbur, while Techno came later on. Along with that, Phil is NOT a villain at this point in the clinic-verse. If you remember from clinic, Phil didn't become a villain until after he had both Wil and Techno in his care, and needed to start doing criminal stuff to pay his bills. Maybe one day I'll write a fic exploring SBI's early villain days, but that's not this fic. This fic is just wholesome bonding and accidental adoption.

TWs for pretty much this whole fic: Wilbur is a homeless 12 year old. There are a lot of descriptions of him being hungry, him thinking about food in terms of how full it can make

him, and symptoms of starvation. Keep that in mind when going into this and keep yourselves safe!

hope you guys enjoy!

thief

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wilbur hated winter.

He used to like it. When he was a lot younger, he remembered his mother holding onto him as he stretched his head out the window of their apartment, sticking his tongue out to catch snowflakes before they hit the ground and melted. It was never cold enough for the snow to stick in the city, but the wind would be icy and his dark hair would be covered in soft snow that he would shake out all onto their living room floor. His mother would laugh and wrap him into a blanket burrito to warm him up, and he'd fall asleep curled into her side, watching the snowflakes flutter past the window.

Wilbur couldn't remember his mother's face now, but he could remember the snow. That was part of why he didn't like it.

The other reason he didn't like winter was because even when it didn't snow, it was cold. *Really* cold. And right now, the thin black jacket he'd walked out of a thrift store wearing about two months earlier really wasn't enough to block out the icy window blowing down the street.

At the very least, running helped keep him warm. With his heart pounding in his ears and blood pumping through his veins, he didn't notice the stiffness in his fingers or the goosebumps raised along his arms.

So pros at the moment: he was running right now, and the only cold he could feel was the wind biting at his cheeks.

Cons at the moment: he was being chased.

Wilbur sprinted down the street, dodging and weaving between the people walking on the sidewalk as best he could. There was a loaf of bread clenched between his numb fingers, the plastic wrapping crinkling in his ears with every sharp turn. Behind him, he could hear the shopkeeper screaming for him, and when he spared a glance over his shoulder, he saw the man was gaining on him.

Ignoring the burning in his lungs, Wilbur pushed himself to run faster. His throat was aching from both his greedy gulps of the winter air, and also from when he'd tried to use his power on the shopkeeper earlier and failed.

Normally, Wilbur was pretty good at using his power. Sometimes he was too good at it, and would accidentally command people to do things when he didn't want them to. Like his last foster family. He hadn't meant to make his foster sister go jump in the pool. She had just been harassing him over and over trying to get him to do her homework for her. When he told

her ‘go jump in the pool’, he had meant it as a joke and not a command, but then honey coated the words without him meaning to put it there.

According to his social worker, this made him a ‘dangerous case’. But he wasn’t dangerous! He knew he wasn’t! And that’s why he didn’t want to go to that group home for the kids with dangerous powers. He’d heard plenty of horror stories about those places, about how they forced the kids to take weird pills, locked them in their rooms at night, only let them outside for a few hours at a time—it sounded like a prison.

So he ran.

Eleven months later and he still hadn’t been caught. But that could be ruined right now if he didn’t get ahead of this shopkeeper.

Wilbur ducked under someone’s arm as he ran past them, and heard the shopkeeper yell something else behind him. His legs were aching and so was his chest, but he was almost back to his alley. He just needed to lose the shopkeeper. Then he’d be home free.

Suddenly, a hand brushed the back of his jacket. He stumbled forward, risking a glance behind him to see the shopkeeper was right on his heels. Wilbur scrambled to his feet and kept running, fear running through his veins like ice as he clutched onto the bread loaf for dear life.

And that was where his fault was. Wilbur was so focused on the shopkeeper behind him, he didn’t watch where he was going, and found himself slamming right into another person.

Wilbur’s vision swam as he slammed onto the ground, pain lancing through his back. Groaning, he pushed himself up onto his elbows, blinking a few times to try and clear his vision.

Across from him, there was a blonde man lying on the ground as well. Probably the guy he ran into. He definitely didn’t look as old as most of the adults that tended to chase after him, but he was still an adult all the same, which made him dangerous.

The guy opened his eyes, and Wilbur thought they reminded him of glacier ice with how pale and blue they were. He met Wilbur’s gaze, blinking a few times in what seemed like confusion.

“Are you-”

Before the guy could finish his sentence, Wilbur felt something grab onto the back of his hood and yank him to his feet.

“You little shit!” The shopkeeper shouted in his ear. “What the hell is wrong with you? Thinking you could steal my bread right out from under my nose like that?! I oughta call the police on you, boy!”

Shit. Shit shit shit. The shopkeeper was here, and he had Wilbur, and he was going to call the police. Those were all very bad things.

Wilbur wanted to use his voice, but his throat still ached from when he tried it on the man earlier. He didn't think the second time would be the charm here, so he did the next best thing he could think of.

Twisting his head, Wilbur bit the wrist the man was using to hold onto his hood as hard as he could.

"Jesus Christ!" The shopkeeper shouted, dropping Wilbur's hood and clutching his wrist to his chest.

Not wanting the opportunity to go to waste, Wilbur sprinted away from the man, shoving past the guy he'd run into. He mourned the bread, knowing he didn't have time to grab it, but recognized that it was better to lose a meal than to stick around waiting for the police to get called.

Wilbur ran and darted down the first turn he saw. He waited to hear footsteps pounding behind him, to hear the shopkeeper shouting at him to stop, but... there was nothing.

Risking a glance behind him, Wilbur stumbled when he realized the shopkeeper wasn't following him anymore.

A few passersby gave him odd looks at his abrupt stop, but no one tried to ask him why he'd been running. Wilbur strained his ears, listening for the man's shouting as he whipped his head around to try and spot him, but there was nothing.

Creeping back towards the corner he'd turned down, Wilbur peeked his head out from behind the building there, and saw the shopkeeper talking to the guy he'd run into. The guy with the glacier eyes.

Wilbur was too far away to hear what they were saying, but he saw the blonde man smiling at the shopkeeper, putting his hands on his shoulders and making gestures that seemed like they were supposed to be placating. The shopkeeper's face was still twisted into a scowl, but he was listening to the blonde man, and wasn't chasing after Wilbur.

Glancing at the sidewalk, Wilbur saw the loaf of bread right next to the blonde guy's feet. It was still there.

He watched as the blonde man bent down to pick the loaf up, pointing at it and saying something else to the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper's scowl fell, and he sighed as he shook his head. Then, with one wave of his hand, the shopkeeper turned around and went back the way he came, leaving the blonde man with the bread loaf in his hands.

That was Wilbur's bread loaf. He'd stolen it. He'd almost gotten caught for it. The shopkeeper hadn't taken it back, which meant that if Wilbur wanted it, he was going to have to get it from the blonde guy.

Should he try to run and grab it? What if the blonde guy got pissed at him then? Maybe he was waiting for the shopkeeper to go call the police?

As Wilbur was silently debating whether he should try and make a grab for the bread, the blonde man looked over and met Wilbur's eyes. Wilbur froze, heart leaping into his throat as the guy smiled and waved at him with the hand he was using to hold the bread.

He started walking down to the corner, and Wilbur tensed his legs, ready to run again.

"Hey mate!" The guy called out as he got closer, giving Wilbur a friendly smile. "I think you dropped your bread."

Wilbur should run the opposite direction from this guy, but he didn't seem angry at him. If anything, the guy was holding the bread towards him, like he was waiting for Wilbur to take it back.

He didn't trust that. It had to be some kind of test.

"It's not my bread. I stole it," Wilbur said without preamble, narrowing his eyes at the guy who was standing only a few feet away from him now.

The guy shrugged, still holding the bread out. "Yeah, but it's not like that baker was gonna be able to sell it after it got all squished, so it's as good as yours."

That... didn't make sense.

"What did you say to him to make him leave?" Wilbur asked, glancing back up the street where the shopkeeper had disappeared. "Is he gonna come back?"

The guy shook his head. "Nah, I don't think so. I just pointed out how it really wasn't worth the effort to chase a kid down over a messed up loaf of bread."

Now that Wilbur wasn't being actively chased, he could actually get a better look at this man. He had light blonde hair that fell to his shoulders, with part of it pulled up into a small ponytail on the upper part of his head. He also had several small silver hoops in each of his ears, which seemed to be turning the skin around his piercings a bit green. Ew.

Although Wilbur wasn't the best at guessing the ages of adults, he could tell this guy was younger than a lot of them. Maybe in his twenties? That seemed like it fit.

Either way, this guy wasn't anywhere near as scary or mean-looking as the shopkeeper had been. And he seemed genuine about wanting Wilbur to take the bread. Plus, Wilbur's stomach was really starting to hurt with hunger pangs, and he knew if he didn't have the bread, he wouldn't be able to sleep tonight.

Darting forward, Wilbur snatched the bread out of the guy's hands and pressed the loaf to his chest. Then, he took a few steps back, making sure he was out of the man's reach.

"Thanks," Wilbur muttered.

The man smiled at him again. "No problem. Maybe just try to watch where you're going next time."

Wilbur nodded, and took another step back, watching the man to see if he'd try to stop him. When he made no moves towards Wilbur, he figured that was good enough for him, and turned tail to sprint in the opposite direction.

As Wilbur ran down the streets back to the heart of Eastside, he kept checking over his shoulder, waiting to see if the shopkeeper or the blonde man were following him. Neither of them were, and by the time Wilbur skidded to a stop outside the alleyway he was far too familiar with for his liking, he was confident in saying he'd gotten off scot-free.

That was strange. Even though Wilbur had gotten caught, that guy had just given Wilbur the bread without so much as a scolding for stealing. The man hadn't tried to ask Wilbur why he'd taken the bread, and he'd gotten the shopkeeper to back off from chasing him down.

The blonde man had been... nice. Wilbur was pretty sure that was the word he was looking for.

Water splashed on his boots as he trudged through the large puddle that sat at the entrance to the alley. The air stank of stagnant water mixing with the permanent layer of smog that hung in the air, and Wilbur wrinkled his nose as he crouched down, crawling into the small tent he had set up at the furthest end of the alley. The shadows stretched far back here, long enough to keep his tent hidden from the view of the main street.

The tent itself was a thin thing he'd gotten from a grocery store when he'd first landed on the streets. It was dark green and torn in a few spots over the past eleven months, but it was still a shelter, and it protected him from the rain, which was all he really needed it for.

It wasn't raining today, but it was windy. Wilbur huddled as far back in the tent as he could, pulling his knees up to his chest as an icy wind threaded its way down the alley. His hands shook as he tore open the plastic wrapping on the bread, and he wasn't sure if it was from the cold or from the fact that running a whole lot when you hadn't eaten in two days took a lot out of you.

Now that the adrenaline had faded, Wilbur was amazed at himself for how long he'd been able to sprint for. All of his muscles felt stretched out like taffy, and every breath was a struggle as his heart pounded in his chest despite the fact that he'd stopped running a few minutes ago. It would pass eventually, Wilbur knew it would, but it would go away faster if he got something in his stomach.

He tore off chunks of the bread, ignoring the nausea rising in his throat and forcing himself to swallow it. The worst part of being hungry all the time was how hard it became to eat when he actually got food. But the first bite was always the hardest, and after a few minutes of nibbling at the crusts, his stomach settled down and his hunger came roaring to life.

Wilbur finished about a quarter of the loaf before his stomach started to hurt. Even though he was still hungry, he knew if he kept eating he'd just make himself sick, so he forced himself to wrap it up again the best he could and shoved it into the driest corner of the tent he had.

Now, with a comfortably full stomach, Wilbur found his eyelids getting heavy. Settling himself on the floor of the tent with the thin blanket he'd gotten a few months back when

autumn first arrived, it only took a few minutes for Wilbur to drift off into a dreamless sleep.

About a week after his encounter with the friendly blonde man, Wilbur ran into him again.

It was an unusually warm day for January in the city. Not so warm he could take off his jacket, but he wasn't shivering in the wind, and the sun was shining brightly overhead, so Wilbur considered it plenty nice enough to be out and about.

He was at the park. Despite the fact that he didn't like leaving his tent unless he absolutely had to, it was impossible for him to stay there for too long, or else he felt himself going stir crazy. Since he had two leftover sticks of beef jerky he'd stolen from a convenience store the other day sitting in his tent, that meant he was alright on food, and could just take some time to enjoy the sunshine.

It seemed like everyone in the city had the same idea he did with the good weather. The park was full of kids and adults alike. Some families were out having picnics, Wilbur was pretty sure there were a few couples out on dates, and there were a lot of kids chasing each other around the grass.

Wilbur was sitting next to the pond, watching the ducks swim around in circles and listening to their quacking. This park was closer to South Bay than it was to Eastside, but he made the walk just for this pond. The grass in front of it was soft, the ducks were cute, and cops didn't have as much trouble in this park compared to the one more in central Eastside, so it was less likely Wilbur was going to run into any issues when he was there. Overall, it was the perfect place for him to sit and sunbathe.

So that's what he was doing right then. He had his head tilted back so it was facing the sky, letting his shoulders drop as the sunlight warmed his wind-bitten cheeks. For just a moment, he let his eyes flutter shut, trying not to think about what he was going to do when he ate those last two sticks of beef jerky.

Suddenly, the sun was blocked out by something dark, and Wilbur opened his eyes to see someone standing over him.

It was a girl. She looked a few years younger than him—probably somewhere around eight or nine—and had dark hair that fell in thick ringlets down her back.

“What are you doing?” The girl asked, scrunching up her nose at him.

Wilbur frowned. “I just like the sun.”

The girl glanced behind her, as if she hadn't noticed that she was blocking the line for Wilbur's sunlight to reach him. “But you're not doing anything.”

“So?” Wilbur challenged, already getting annoyed at this girl for interrupting him.

The girl stared at him for a moment, her expression unreadable. Then,

“Do you want a flower?” She asked.

Wilbur blinked. “What?”

“I’m trying to practice my powers, so I’m giving people flowers. Do you want one?”

Huh. Wilbur didn’t mind flowers per se, but he didn’t exactly stop to admire them often. He was usually too busy worrying about things like food and watching for cops to stop and notice something as silly as a plant.

“I guess,” Wilbur shrugged.

The girl didn’t smile at this, but she nodded, as if Wilbur had said something very serious. Suddenly, she was crouching down, letting the sunlight fall on him again as she pressed her hand to the grass right next to his feet.

Straightening up, Wilbur looked at the grass around her hand, eyes widening when he saw the yellow patches fading away and being replaced with blades that were green and lush. The girl didn’t look up at him, just scrunched up her face in concentration, and Wilbur watched in silent fascination as a flower blossomed from the dirt between her fingers.

It was a daisy. Small, with snow white petals and a bright golden center. The stem stretched up from the earth, before the petals unfurled like Wilbur was watching one of those time lapse videos.

All in all, it couldn’t have taken more than twenty seconds for the girl to grow the flower. As soon as the daisy was fully bloomed, the girl’s eyes opened and she plucked it from the ground. A warm hand wrapped around his as the girl pressed the stem between his fingers.

“Take good care of it,” she said, her bright green eyes boring into his.

Wilbur nodded. “I will,” he promised, even though he knew it would be dead in a few hours since he didn’t have a vase or anything to keep it in.

With that, the girl straightened up and rushed off, her pale pink skirt billowing out behind her as she ran off—presumably to go give someone else a flower.

Looking away from her, Wilbur’s gaze fell on the flower still pinched between his fingers. The daisy stared at him, and Wilbur stared back. Sometimes, Wilbur wondered what it would be like to have a power that you didn’t have to hide. That girl could go around growing flowers in front of people, and no one would bat an eye. No one was afraid of her. No one called her dangerous. Not like him.

Swallowing the lump in his throat, Wilbur laid back down against the grass, clutching the daisy to his chest. Then, he let his eyes flutter shut so he could resume his interrupted sunbathing.

It wasn’t even a full minute later before another shadow fell over him.

Frowning, Wilbur sat up, trying to shove down his frustration as he prepared to tell the girl he didn’t want a second flower.

But when Wilbur opened his eyes, he stiffened when he realized it wasn't the girl standing above him.

"Did she find you too?" The blonde man from the week before asked, holding up what looked like a white carnation in his hand.

Oh. The flower.

Sitting up, Wilbur held his own daisy for the man to see. "Yup. Sure did."

The man snorted and crouched down so he was at eye level with Wilbur sitting on the grass. "Funny running into you again. Did you enjoy the bread?"

Wilbur wondered if this was a trick question, but just like before, the guy didn't seem upset about him stealing the bread. His smile was patient, and after a few seconds of hesitation, Wilbur figured it wouldn't hurt to be honest.

"It was fine," he said, spinning the stem between his fingers.

The man hummed. "How do you usually take your toast? I know I like putting jelly on mine."

Well... Wilbur couldn't remember the last time he'd actually had bread *with* something on it.

"I mean, I kinda just eat it by itself," Wilbur shrugged, keeping his eyes down.

To Wilbur's surprise, the man laughed at this. "You're a bit of a weird kid, you know that, right?"

Wilbur whipped his head up, and scowled at the guy. "That's fucking rude," he snapped without thinking.

Immediately he regretted it, wondering if the man was going to yell at him for being disrespectful. But again, the blonde man surprised him by laughing even more.

"You have a mouth on you," the guy commented, grinning at him. "Well, that's a fucking relief. I'm shit at remembering not to curse around kids."

An idea popped into Wilbur's head just then. He looked up at the blonde man with wide eyes, and tried to look as innocent as possible as he asked, "What does 'shit' mean?"

All of the color drained from the blonde man's face, and Wilbur could only keep his innocent expression for a few seconds before he burst out laughing.

"Oh my god, I can't believe you fell for that!" Wilbur laughed, falling back against the grass. "Of course I know what shit means, dumbass."

The blonde man's terrified look immediately melted into one of pure relief. "Oh you little shit, you nearly gave me a heart attack."

“It was pretty funny, to be fair,” Wilbur pointed out, smirking at the guy. “I know all the curse words in the book!”

“Do you?” The man asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yup! I know fuck, shit, piss, dick, cunt-”

Suddenly, there was a hand slamming over his mouth as the man glanced nervously at a woman nearby. She was holding a toddler, and was giving the blonde man a dirty look.

“No need to go through the whole list, mate. I believe you,” the guy reassured him, dropping his hand from Wilbur’s mouth after a moment.

“I could’ve bitten you just then,” Wilbur said, watching the man wipe his hand off on his shirt.

“Well, I’m very glad you didn’t,” the man told him, falling back so he was sitting in the grass a few feet away from him.

“I might still bite you,” Wilbur told him, leaning back on his hands. “You are a strange man after all, and here you are, talking to some random kid you saw steal some bread.”

The man blinked at this, his grin falling as heat rose to his cheeks. “Oh shit, uh- sorry. I just came here to feed the ducks and I noticed you over here and I thought I’d say hi.”

Wilbur narrowed his eyes at the man. “Why? I thought you wouldn’t even remember my face.”

“I dunno, I guess it’s not every day you see a kid getting chased down the street for stealing bread of all things,” the man said, reaching into his pocket for something. “Can I ask why you were stealing bread anyway? I’d assume most kids your age would try to steal candy or something. Not just plain bread.”

There was a moment of silence as the man took out a plastic bag from his coat pocket. It was filled with birdseed, and Wilbur thought over how to answer as the man reached inside the bag to take out a small handful of the stuff.

“I was just hungry,” Wilbur muttered after a few seconds.

For a moment, the man didn’t react. He tossed the birdseed out onto the water, and Wilbur watched as three ducks swam over, quacking happily as they started chomping down on the snack.

“So you stole plain bread? Not even, like, a sandwich or something?” The guy pushed, frowning at Wilbur.

Wilbur resisted the urge to curl in on himself. “Bread lasts longer, and it fills you up more.”

More silence. The man was staring at him like he was a puzzle, his glacier eyes seeming as though they were trying to piece together everything Wilbur wasn’t saying. But all Wilbur

had said was that bread was filling and lasted a while. There wasn't any harm in that, right?

Finally, after several seconds, understanding seemed to dawn on the man's face. He blinked a few times, before shaking his head and turning back to the pond.

"My name's Phil, by the way," he introduced, tossing another handful of birdseed out onto the water.

Wilbur watched a mother duck swim over to the food, a trail of fuzzy yellow babies chirping loudly behind her. She quacked a few times, moving out of the way for the babies to get to the seed. They all chirped and squeaked in delight, and the mother watched them while taking a few small bites of the birdseed that floated near her.

He turned to look at Phil, and saw the man was giving him that same, friendly smile he'd given him when he had handed the bread back to him. It wouldn't hurt to just tell the guy his name, right?

"Wilbur," he replied, wrapping his coat tighter around him when a chilly breeze blew down the grassy slope they were sitting on.

"It's nice to meet you, Wilbur," Phil said.

It was the first time in a long time Wilbur thought the person who said that to him actually sounded like they meant it.

"Do you want to try feeding them?" Phil then asked, holding the bag of birdseed out to him.

And he thought back to the last time he'd fed ducks. The fuzzy memories of his young childhood flashing through his mind, grasping onto only the most fleeting of moments—sticking his pudgy fingers into a bag of cold peas, his mother cheering when he tossed the handful onto the water right in front of the waiting ducks. He ended up spilling half the bag on the grass, but at least a few of the ducks had gotten food that day.

Nodding, Wilbur reached for the bag. "Okay," he said.

He dipped his fingers into the bag, the smooth seeds pooling in his palm. Once he'd gotten a good amount, he carefully lifted his hand away from the plastic, and tossed it as far as he could onto the water.

The ducks quacked in delight, rushing over to get the next round of their meal. Wilbur couldn't help but smile when he saw the yellow ducklings bashing into one another as they tried to get their own portions.

Phil didn't say anything. Instead, he just held out the bag again, and Wilbur took another handful to toss to the ducks.

They stayed like that for about ten minutes, silently taking turns tossing the birdseed Phil had brought onto the water. The sun was still shining, warming Wilbur's cheeks and taking the harsh edge off the cold breeze that cut right through his coat. At one point, the mother duck

actually climbed out of the pond, marching across the shore with her army of fuzzy babies right behind her, before disappearing into the reeds that sat right next to the water.

When the bag was empty, Wilbur brushed his hand off and waited for Phil to get up and leave. Then, Wilbur could lay back down and go back to sunbathing. It was still early in the afternoon, so he didn't have to go back to his tent just yet. But it felt rude to lay down and close his eyes with Phil still sitting right next to him.

"Say, are you hungry?"

Wilbur whipped his head to look at Phil. "What?"

"I asked if you were hungry," Phil repeated, even though Wilbur had definitely heard him the first time. "There's a new diner that opened up just down the block, and I wanted to go get lunch there. I figured since you were nice enough to feed the ducks with me, might as well extend an invite to you."

And- *fuck*, if that wasn't a tempting offer. Of course Wilbur was hungry. He was always hungry these days.

But Wilbur was suspicious. Although Phil had seemed perfectly nice so far, there was no reason for him to be inviting Wilbur to lunch with him. While Wilbur doubted Phil figured out he was a runaway, it was still strange for Phil to want to have lunch with some kid he'd just met—a kid that he knew was a thief.

"I don't have any money on me," Wilbur said, figuring it was easiest to just point that out.

"Oh, it was gonna be my treat," Phil explained quickly. "It's not very polite to invite someone to lunch and then not pay for their meal, y'know?"

Well... shit. Even if Wilbur was a little confused by Phil's invitation, he couldn't just say no to free food.

"Okay," Wilbur said, pushing to his feet. "I'll go."

"Great," Phil replied, standing up as well. "It's right down this way, should only take a few minutes to walk."

They left the park behind, and on their way out, Wilbur noticed the flower girl from earlier laying down on the grass with her arms and legs stretched out. Small vines and flowers had wrapped themselves over her limbs, and her dark curls were splayed out behind her, roses blossoming between the strands. Her eyes were closed—like she was sleeping.

What a pretty power, Wilbur thought to himself as they passed by. There was a twinge of jealousy in his chest at the reminder he'd never be able to do anything pretty with his voice like that. All he could do was make people afraid of him. Make people distrust him because he could control them. Not that he wanted to, but that didn't seem to matter. The potential alone was enough to make people treat him like he was a bomb ready to go off at any moment.

They passed out of the park and onto the sidewalk. Phil led the way, weaving between men and women with complete ease. He didn't walk too fast, regularly glancing behind him to make sure Wilbur was keeping up.

It was only one turn later before the diner came into view. It sat squarely in the place Wilbur knew an old hardware store that had gone out of business used to sit. The place was painted robin's egg blue, with large windows on the sides revealing cheerful red booths inside. On the top of the diner in cursive lettering was the name of the place.

The Demon's Diner.

"What kind of a name is that?" Wilbur asked, scrunching up his nose as he followed Phil to the door.

Phil chuckled, holding the door open for him. "It'll make sense in a second."

As soon as Wilbur stepped inside, his stomach began to grumble something fierce. He was practically hit in the face with the smell of sizzling meat being fried and sweet pastries baking. There was the quiet murmur of conversation hanging over the place, along with the clinking of silverware against glass plates. It had been so long since he'd been inside a restaurant, he'd forgotten how overwhelming all the scents and sounds could be.

Then, Wilbur's eyes fell on the host, and he suddenly understood the name of the diner.

The host was tall. Inhumanly tall. Of course most adults were a lot taller than Wilbur, but this... man? Thing? Creature? Whatever it was, it towered over Phil, and probably anyone else it ever met. It was wearing pitch black robes with red embroidery, and when Wilbur tried to look at its face, all he saw were shadows.

It had eyes though. Glowing white dots in the darkness under its hood. Wilbur froze in place, heart stopping in his chest as he stared at the monster.

"Welcome to the Demon's Diner!" The- well, the *demon* greeted them, its voice sounding strangely human compared to its inhuman appearance. "Can I get you two a table?"

"Yeah, that would- wait, Wil, you okay?"

Phil only just seemed to notice Wilbur's terrified expression, and crouched down so he was at eye level with him. "Hey, it's okay, I know he looks a little scary, but-"

"Oh no, did I scare the little muffin?" The demon asked, sounding distraught at the idea of freaking Wilbur out. "I'm sorry, I know I look a little, uh, intimidating, but it's just my powers. I'm just a normal person like you and your... dad?"

Eyes widening, Phil immediately straightened up to face the demon. "Uh, he's not- I'm not-" Phil cut himself off, letting out a deep sigh as the demon's white eyes narrowed in what seemed like confusion.

"He's not...?" The demon repeated, waiting for Phil to finish his sentence.

Phil clenched his jaw, some internal debate going on inside of him that Wilbur couldn't even begin to guess. Then, he leaned over to the demon, and whispered something into the place Wilbur imagined his ear probably was.

At the very least, Wilbur's curiosity about what Phil was saying to the demon began to win out over his fear. He felt his limbs thaw as Phil pulled back from the demon, with the demon nodding like they had reached some shared level of understanding.

"Oh, I got it. I'll show you guys to a table right away!" The demon said, his cheery tone from earlier returning. He picked up two menus and with a swish of his dark robes, he gestured for Phil and Wilbur to follow him.

They walked through the diner, Wilbur's muddy boots leaving a few chunks of dirt against the polished black and white tile floors. A few other booths were occupied, the patrons barely giving the demon a second glance as they chatted over plates piled high with things like pancakes or burgers. Once again, Wilbur's stomach growled loudly, and Phil shot him a knowing grin that made Wilbur flush.

The demon placed two menus down at a table, and Wilbur slid onto the squeaky leather seat on one side, with Phil settling himself on the other.

"Your server should be with you in just a minute. My name is Bad, and if you need anything—"

Suddenly, the demon—Bad, apparently—was cut off by a loud crashing sound coming from behind the breakfast bar that sat in the middle of the restaurant. The crash was followed by high-pitched giggling, and Bad let out a deep sigh.

"Sapnap! Did you break something?" He yelled over to the bar. The question was only answered by more giggling, and Bad sighed. "I'm so sorry, I should go take care of that. My son can be a bit of a handful."

Then, Bad was whirling around to march towards the breakfast bar. "Skeppy, can you take care of that- Sapnap! What did I tell you about setting fires inside—"

Wilbur craned his neck to try and see what was going on, but his view was blocked by another man walking in front of his line of sight. This man wasn't any kind of weird demon creature. For the most part, he looked like a normal guy in a red waiter's uniform, but when he peered closer, he noticed parts of his skin were covered in clusters of bright blue crystals.

"Hey there, sorry for the commotion—" there was a yelp from Bad, but the waiter continued on without acknowledging it, "but I want to know if I can start you off with anything to drink?"

"Just some waters for the moment would be good," Phil answered, flashing the waiter a casual smile.

The waiter—Wilbur noticed his nametag read 'Skeppy'—nodded before rushing off. There was no more yelling from Bad, but Wilbur did smell smoke coming from the breakfast bar.

There didn't seem to be any visible fire though, and no one else in the diner looked alarmed by it, so Wilbur figured it was probably alright.

Phil pushed a menu towards him. "Here, figure out what you wanna order."

Wilbur's eyes widened as he looked at the pictures of the different dishes. His stomach growled again, and he tried to ignore it as he skimmed through the options. He could go for something sweet like pancakes, or he could get something more savory like a burger.

While the pancakes sounded really good, the burger would probably be more filling. If Wilbur got the burger, he probably wouldn't even start to feel hungry again till tomorrow morning.

It was then Wilbur's eyes flickered to the right, and he saw the price of the burger meal. He flinched back at the number, and immediately looked back to the pancakes to compare.

Okay. The pancakes were cheaper. Not by much, but by a bit.

But... Phil was paying for his food. The pancakes might still be too much to ask for, and the last thing Wilbur wanted was to upset the guy. He'd already been nice enough to give Wilbur back his bread, and now he was buying him food. The least Wilbur could do was order something inexpensive.

"Got any ideas for what to get?" Phil asked, raising an eyebrow at him.

Shrinking back into the red leather, Wilbur pointed at one of the cheapest things he could find on the menu. Phil's face immediately fell.

"Aw, mate, you can't just order a side of bacon. That's only two pieces," Phil told him, furrowing his brows.

Wilbur shrugged. "Everything is expensive."

Somehow, Phil's face managed to fall even more. "Wil, you don't need to worry about the price." When Wilbur didn't say anything, Phil sighed. "Why don't you tell me what you would want to get if you weren't worried about the money, and I'll tell you if it's too expensive or not?"

Well... that made sense.

"The pancakes look good," Wilbur muttered, pointing at the picture of the pancakes that had fruit scattered on top in the shape of a smiley face.

Phil chuckled at Wilbur's choice. "Don't worry, I can fit that into my budget no problem."

Okay, that was a relief.

With Phil mentioning his budget though, that sparked a question in Wilbur's mind.

"What's your job anyway?" Wilbur asked, frowning at him.

Phil blinked. "Oh, my job? It's nothing special. I just work at a video game shop."

Huh. That didn't sound like all the normal, boring jobs adults usually had. Wilbur wasn't sure if he'd want to work at a video game shop, but it definitely sounded cooler than working in an office or something.

"Do you have a favorite video game?" Phil then asked.

Wilbur shrugged. "Never played them much." That was true. While he'd seen old foster siblings playing video games a few times before, he had never been invited to join them, and even if he had, he probably would've said no. Just didn't seem interesting to him.

"Damn, most kids your age love video games," Phil said, laughing a bit. "The shop is always full of kids running around, asking if we have the latest Pokemon game or Mario Kart in stock."

Once again, Wilbur shrugged. He'd never played those games before.

Phil's smile faded, but before Wilbur could feel bad for possibly upsetting the man, Skeppy came back with two glasses of water. He set them down in front of each of them, before pulling out a notepad.

"Alright, you guys ready to order?"

"Sure are," Phil said. "Wil, you wanna go first?"

With the combined stares of both Skeppy and Phil, Wilbur found himself shrinking back again. Was he really allowed to order the pancakes? What if Phil misunderstood and thought he meant different pancakes that were cheaper?

After a few seconds of silence, Phil seemed to realize Wilbur wasn't going to answer. "He'll have the smiley face pancakes," Phil ordered for him.

Skeppy nodded and wrote it down. Then Phil gave his own order, before Skeppy took the menus and hurried away from the table. Bad had disappeared, there was no more giggling coming from behind the breakfast bar, and Wilbur couldn't smell smoke anymore. Hopefully that was a good thing.

"So," Phil began once Skeppy had disappeared again, "if you don't really like video games, what else do you like to do?"

Wilbur blinked. "Huh?"

"Do you have any hobbies?" Phil pushed. "Y'know, something you do in your free time?"

Free time. Something Wilbur certainly had an abundance of ever since he'd stopped going to school. Most of the time if he wasn't actively trying to steal food or use his voice to sneak into a gym so he could take a shower, he was worrying about how much food he had left or if cops were patrolling nearby.

Back when he still lived at his old foster home though, Wilbur had spent his free time in a few different ways. It felt so far away now, but he tried to remember the things he liked to do after he'd gotten home from school and wanted to put off doing his homework.

"Um... I like singing," Wilbur admitted, fiddling with his hands on the table.

Sometimes when he got home from school, his foster sister would be at some club, and his foster parents would still be at work. That meant Wilbur had the house to himself. His old foster parents had a huge collection of CD's and an old pair of speakers that didn't take long for Wilbur to figure out how to use. He would find one of his favorite CD's, pop it in the tray, and sing along to the music as loudly as he wanted.

Then there were the quieter times. When he wasn't alone in the house, and would be confined to his room, singing under his breath while he did his homework or just had a tune in his head he couldn't get out. There had been a few times he'd even tried writing songs of his own, but it wasn't like he could play any instruments, so the melody would exist only in his mind.

"Really? That's so cool, I can't sing for shit," Phil chuckled. "Do you play any instruments?" Wilbur shook his head. Phil frowned. "Have you ever wanted to learn?" A nod. "What instrument do you wanna learn?"

"Guitar," Wilbur answered, thinking of the hours he spent watching YouTube videos about how to play the guitar, learning how to place his hands on the imaginary guitar he would hold on his lap, just so he could be ready if he ever had the chance to get a real one.

"Guitar is a really cool one. I've heard it's not that hard to learn at first either," Phil told him, smiling gently. "Is there anything else you're interested in besides music? Like a favorite school subject or something?"

"I liked history," Wilbur said, having taken to tearing apart the paper napkin settled in front of him.

Phil frowned at that. "Do you not like it anymore?"

Oh shit. Wilbur stiffened as he realized his slipup, and tried not to look too nervous as he stammered for a lie to save his skin.

"Uh- it got, um, fucking boring this year," he explained, keeping his eyes on his lap as he tore another strip from the paper napkin. "It was cool before, but I dunno if I like it anymore."

There was a beat as Phil's frown deepened, and Wilbur could practically feel the suspicion radiating off of the man.

But then, as quickly as it appeared, Phil smiled again and his suspicion was gone. "That's a shame. What was your favorite part of history class though? Before it got boring, I mean."

"I liked learning about governments. How they form and all that," Wilbur said, letting out a silent sigh of relief that Phil didn't push his suspicions.

"Really? Governments?"

Wilbur narrowed his eyes. “Is that a bad thing?”

Phil blinked before quickly shaking his head. “Not at all! It’s just- well, didn’t really think a kid would be interested in something like government.”

Once again, Wilbur wasn’t sure how to respond to that. He stayed silent, continuing to tear his napkin apart.

“How old are you, by the way?”

Wilbur raised an eyebrow. “How old are *you*?” He shot back.

Chuckling at the question being turned around on him, Phil pushed the strands of hair that had fallen out of his half-ponytail away from his face. “I’m twenty-six.”

“You’re old,” Wilbur said, scrunching up his nose. While he knew twenty-six wasn’t that old compared to his foster parents, who had been in their forties, or his social worker, who was thirty-five, twenty-six was definitely *old*. At least to him.

“I’m not old!” Phil immediately protested.

“Yes you are. You’re basically one foot in the grave,” Wilbur teased, grinning at Phil.

“You’re, uh-” he paused to count on his fingers how many years existed between him and Phil, “you’re fourteen years older than me! That’s fucking ancient!”

Phil furrowed his brows, pausing for a moment and Wilbur wondered if he was counting in his head. Then, his eyes widened. “You’re twelve?” Wilbur nodded, and Phil frowned. “And your parents just let you wander around the city by yourself?”

Wilbur stiffened. Shit. He should’ve lied. Said he was fourteen. He was on the taller side for his age, so Phil probably would’ve believed him. That was stupid. Stupid stupid stupid.

“Um, yeah, they trust me,” Wilbur lied, keeping his head down as he wrapped a strip of napkin around his finger.

There was a pause. Then, Phil opened his mouth to say something, but suddenly there was a blur of movement in front of their table.

“Here’s your food,” Skeppy announced, and Wilbur could’ve hugged the man for his perfect timing.

The topic of parents forgotten, Wilbur straightened up as Skeppy set the pancakes in front of him, his stomach announcing its eagerness again as he stared at the fluffy golden stack. There was a smiley face made out of blueberries and strawberries with bananas for eyes, and Wilbur’s mouth was already watering, not being able to remember the last time he’d eaten fruit.

“Thank you,” Phil said as Skeppy walked away. Looking up from his own food, Wilbur saw Phil had ordered the same burger he’d been considering earlier, with a side of fries. Phil noticed him staring, and held up a fry towards him. “You want some of my fries?”

Wilbur flushed and shook his head. “I- I’m not gonna take your food. Thank you though.” Phil was already paying for the pancakes, he didn’t need Wilbur stealing his own meal as well.

Phil frowned again, and Wilbur flinched when a few french fries were dropped onto the edge of his plate. “Have a few, mate. I’m not gonna finish all of them.”

Picking up his fork and knife, Wilbur risked another glance up at the man. “Thanks.”

Instead of trying the fries though, first Wilbur decided to take a bite of his pancakes. That was a mistake.

As soon as Wilbur took the first bite, his stomach roared to life. The pancakes themselves were fluffy, sweet, and perfectly buttered. The fruit was crisp and juicy. By all accounts, this was a great meal, and Wilbur should savor it because it wasn’t often he got the chance to eat food like this.

But he didn’t. Instead, he inhaled the entire thing like a vacuum, while Phil watched him with a mildly concerned expression cast over his face.

By the time Wilbur finished, his stomach was aching, but it was the first time he’d felt full in ages. He ended up crunching on the fries Phil gave him as well, ignoring the pain in his abdomen in favor of not letting any food go to waste.

“Guess you liked the pancakes,” Phil said with an awkward laugh, only having finished about half his burger.

“They were really good,” Wilbur told him, sipping on his water.

Another silence fell between them. Phil took a bite of his burger, and Wilbur watched as Bad reappeared from where he’d gone, holding a receipt tray and a paper bag.

“Here’s your check for whenever you’re ready,” Bad said, putting down the receipt in front of Phil. Then, he put the paper bag in front of Wilbur. “And here you go! A few muffins for a little muffin.”

Wilbur frowned. “Um, we didn’t order-”

“It’s a special thing we’re doing since we just recently opened,” Bad quickly explained. “First time customers like you get a sampling of our muffins, on the house!”

Free food?

Opening the bag, Wilbur was hit with the smell of something sweet and baked. He saw three muffins sitting at the bottom of the bag, the puffy tops dotted with chocolate chips and blueberries.

“Are you sure?” Wilbur asked, wondering why he didn’t see any other customers with bags like his.

“I’m sure! Muffins are my specialty, so I want to give you a chance to try them,” Bad said, and although his face was still shrouded in shadow, Wilbur got the sense he was smiling.

“Here’s my card,” Phil said, handing Bad the tray with a credit card sitting on top of the receipt.

Wilbur frowned, having wanted to get a look at the receipt so he knew how much money Phil spent on him. But Bad whisked the tray away before he could look.

“Great! I’ll be right back,” Bad told him, his robes swishing as he hurried back towards the register.

Turning his gaze back to the bag, Wilbur thought about how nice it would be to have those muffins to snack on tomorrow. They wouldn’t keep for long, but he’d be full for two days in a row. That was... rare.

But then Wilbur glanced over to Phil, and he winced before forcing himself to push the bag over to him. “Here, these are yours I think.”

Phil frowned and immediately pushed the bag back to his side of the table. “I’m not a first time customer. I came here last week. These are for you, mate.”

Wilbur frowned again. “But you’re the one who paid, not me.”

“Trust me, I don’t need the extra carbs,” Phil laughed, shoving the bag closer to him. “If I take them, they’ll just go to waste. You take them.”

Well, Wilbur wasn’t going to let perfectly good muffins go to waste like that.

“Okay, if you’re sure,” Wilbur said, tugging the bag down so it rested in his lap. The muffins—which were fresh out of the oven—warmed his legs, and he pulled the bag closer to his chest.

Bad came back a moment later, handing Phil his card and patting Wilbur on the head before saying his goodbye. Both Phil and Wilbur got up from the table, waving to Skeppy as they made their way out of the diner.

Outside the diner, the chilly wind from earlier had picked back up. The warmth from earlier was already fading with the setting sun, and Wilbur shivered as he tried not to think about how unpleasant it was going to be to sleep tonight.

“Well, uh, I guess this is where we part ways,” Phil said, looking like he didn’t know what to do with his hands as he glanced around. “Thanks for coming to lunch with me, Wil. It was nice talking to you.”

“It was nice talking to you too,” Wilbur admitted. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d just talked to someone for this long, just getting to know them and not trying to see if they were going to call the cops on him.

Then, figuring the conversation was over, Wilbur pulled the muffin bag closer to his chest and turned to leave-

“Wilbur!”

Pausing, Wilbur glanced over his shoulder and saw Phil giving him a hesitant smile.

“I go to the park nearly every day after my shift to feed the ducks. If you ever want to come chat again, I wouldn’t mind the company,” Phil told him, shoving his hands in his pockets.

Wilbur blinked. He shouldn’t spend so much time with this guy. He was bound to slip up sooner or later, and then Phil would call CPS, and Wilbur would have to run again.

But... Phil was nice. He was nice, funny, and maybe if Wilbur got lucky, he could even buy him food again.

“Okay,” Wilbur said.

It wasn’t a promise, but it wasn’t him saying no to Phil’s offer either. He would wait to see how he felt tomorrow to decide if he wanted to talk to Phil again.

That seemed to be good enough for Phil. He waved, before turning on his heel and walking the opposite direction of Wilbur.

For a moment, Wilbur watched him go. The large, black coat he wore billowed in the wind, flaring out behind him in a way that almost reminded Wilbur of wings.

Then, another breeze cut through his coat, and Wilbur forced himself to turn and walk back to his alley. He kept the muffins close to his chest, breathing in their sweet scent through the top of the bag and smiling every time he remembered he’d get to eat them in the morning.

That night, despite the cold, Wilbur slept better than he had in months.

Chapter End Notes

god that first chapter was huge there was literally no place for me to break it up into smaller chunks. the next two chapters are gonna be a bit smaller though. hope you guys enjoyed anyway!

also, in case you didn't pick up on it, Phil suspected right off the bat that Wilbur had food insecurity. at the diner, what he whispered in Bad's ear was basically along the lines of "he's not my kid but I'm pretty sure he might be homeless or close to it and I'm just trying to get him a full meal" and Bad immediately was like "oh yeah let's get him food." so yeah, the first time customer muffin deal was total bullshit, Bad just wanted to give Wilbur extra food lmao

and yes Phil is only 26 in this! i imagined him to be around 38 in clinic, so he's pretty young! he doesn't intend to get a kid whatsoever, but when you start bonding with this cute lil street gremlin, well, there's not much you can do.

anyway, I have this entire thing prewritten so I'll probably post one chapter every other day! make sure to subscribe to keep an eye out for the updates!

let me know what you thought down in the comments, I don't respond to most but I read them all and they really make my day <3

hmu on tumblr and twitter @bonesandthebees

a day at the park

Chapter Summary

Wilbur continues to get to know Phil better.

Chapter Notes

hey guys!! i know i said i was gonna update this every other day but I got a little impatient and decided hey why not just post this right now because... I dunno I want to

anyway as always thank you all so much for all the love on the last chapter, really glad you're enjoying the fluff so far and now we're moving into a little more hurt/comfort so look forward to that

TWs for this chapter: symptoms of severe hunger/starvation, life threatening situations (unrelated to the hunger), minor panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur ended up going back to the park the next day. As promised, Phil was there with a bag of birdseed for the ducks, and he beamed when he saw Wilbur walking towards him. They chatted more, and although Phil didn't take him to the diner again, he had packed himself some sandwiches for his lunch and ended up giving his second one to Wilbur.

After that, a routine was formed.

Nearly every day, Wilbur would go to the park in the late afternoon to feed the ducks with Phil. They would sit on the grass, tossing the birdseed on the water and chatting about anything and everything—barring certain things that Wilbur knew he couldn't talk about with Phil.

Wilbur ended up telling Phil everything he could remember from the last history class he'd taken. About the revolution, and the government that was formed from the spirit of united people. He rambled about all the random facts he knew about the declaration and the contentious election that followed. When Wilbur used to try and talk about this with kids in his class, they'd either ignore him or make fun of him for being so interested in something boring like that. But Phil didn't do either of those things. He listened, asking questions and encouraging Wilbur to tell him more.

In turn, Wilbur started asking more questions about Phil. Apparently, Phil hadn't been sure what he wanted to do after he graduated from school, and ended up not going to university. Instead, he jumped into working, hopping between different stores before settling at the video game store a few years back. He still didn't know if he had any more grand plans for his life, but he didn't seem too worried about it.

Personally, Wilbur thought it was refreshing to hear an adult be okay with not having some grand plan for his life. Wilbur remembered how often he used to get asked what he wanted to do when he grew up, and there were just so many different things Wilbur had never been sure how to answer.

Phil never asked that. Instead, he just wanted to know what Wilbur was interested in, and seemed to genuinely like talking to him. It wasn't long before Wilbur had to admit that he liked talking to Phil too.

Not only was Phil funny and cursed a lot, but it just felt different talking to him than talking to other adults had in the past. Other adults seemed to look down on Wilbur, treating him like a baby—either because they felt bad for him being a foster kid, or they just didn't think a kid his age could understand what they were talking about. But that wasn't the case with Phil, and Wilbur really liked the change.

Of course, Phil didn't know about Wilbur's situation. Every time he tried to ask about Wilbur's parents, he'd either come up with a lie or just ignore the question. Thankfully, Phil didn't push.

Almost every single time, their duck feeding sessions would end with Wilbur getting food in some way or another. Sometimes Phil would just give him the extra food he packed, but other times they'd go back to the diner. Bad was always delighted to see them, and wanted avid feedback on the muffins he'd given Wilbur before.

After their third visit, Bad asked Wilbur if he wanted to be a taste tester for new muffin flavors. He needed someone to tell him if his new combinations were good or not, and according to Bad, "Skeppy is sick of trying muffins, and Sapnap will eat anything you put in front of him."

It was an easy deal to take. Wilbur got muffins for free, and all he had to do was tell Bad what he liked about them. It wasn't a super regular thing, mainly because he and Phil didn't go to the diner every day, but Wilbur was far less hungry than he'd been before so that was a plus.

Nearly a month after they first met, Wilbur found himself in the park with Phil again. They were chatting about different types of sweets they both liked, which turned out to be a rather contentious subject between them because they had completely different tastes.

"How the hell can you like candy corn?" Wilbur asked, gaping at Phil as birdseed slipped between his fingers and onto the grass below his feet.

"Wh- It's good!" Phil protested, seeming offended that his taste in candy was being scrutinized. "It's sweet, y'know?"

“It’s nasty,” Wilbur argued, sticking his tongue out in mock disgust. “You have bad taste.”

“Maybe you’re the one who has bad taste,” Phil shot back, raising an eyebrow at Wilbur.

“Why would I have a job taste testing muffins if I didn’t have good taste?” Wilbur countered, smirking at Phil.

Phil chuckled at this and shook his head. “Okay, well, you got me-” suddenly, he was cut off mid sentence by the deafening sound of glass shattering behind them.

Both Phil and Wilbur snapped their heads over to the source of the noise, and Wilbur’s heart skipped a beat in his chest when he saw the windows of a small convenience store had been blown out. Thick black smoke was billowing from the window frames, and Wilbur gasped when he saw a shadow move inside.

A hand appeared from the darkness, grasping onto the ledge of the windowsill. Then there was a second hand, and Wilbur watched someone in a bright mask that was reminiscent of a gingerbread man climb out of the smoking store.

As he stumbled to his feet on the sidewalk, there was a flash of dark blue flying through the sky, and suddenly there was a hero landing right in front of the gingerbread man. Wilbur recognized the hero immediately, having seen him plastered across news screens over and over again for the past few years. If a top hero like that guy was here, that meant the gingerbread man could only be a villain.

“Oh shit,” Phil muttered beside him.

Oh shit was right. Wilbur’s eyes widened as the gingerbread man reached his hands towards a car that was parked a few feet away. In one swift motion, the roof of the car peeled itself off, with the gingerbread man moving his hands like he was directing the metal itself.

The hero and the villain seemed like they were talking to one another, but Wilbur was too far away to hear it. Whatever was said though must’ve pissed the hero off though, because suddenly, he charged at the gingerbread man.

The gingerbread man stumbled when the hero slammed into him, his arms swinging wildly in every direction. The giant sheet of metal above his head reacted, and next thing Wilbur knew, he was frozen watching the roof of the car fly high into the air above the street, until it started coming back down straight towards the park bench he and Phil were sitting on.

“Wilbur, let’s go!” Phil yelled. There was a hand wrapping tightly around his wrist, and Wilbur could only stumble along as Phil jerked him away from the bench and onto the grass.

Wilbur fell face first into the grass at the same time as Phil. There was a deafening crash behind them, and when Wilbur glanced back, he saw the giant sheet of metal sticking out of the ground right where the bench had been.

Before Wilbur could take a breath to get his bearings though, Phil was already scrambling to his feet, yanking Wilbur up by the wrist until they were both running away from the hero and

the villain. There was more loud crashing behind them, and from the corner of his eye Wilbur could see more giant pieces of metal raining from the sky. Phil was running and Wilbur struggled to keep up with him, tripping over his own feet and fighting to try and see where the pieces of metal were falling from.

After the third time Wilbur tripped, he felt warm arms wrapping around him, and next thing he knew he was being carried by Phil as they sprinted away from the fight. Wilbur clutched onto Phil's coat, his heart pounding out of his chest in time with Phil's racing footsteps.

A little ways away, Wilbur spotted a children's playground that had long since been emptied out. Phil seemed to notice it at the same time Wilbur did, because he veered to the right to run straight for it.

As soon as they were on the wood chips, Phil dropped to his knees, letting go of Wilbur and pushing him towards the slide.

"We need to hide underneath it!" Phil told him.

Wilbur nodded and crawled for the slide. Giant hunks of metal were still raining down and—holy shit, did a car just fly into the pond?

Judging by the furious quacking that followed the loud splash, Wilbur imagined that yes, a car did land in the pond. The ducks weren't going to be too happy about that.

Underneath the slide, the metal supports were rusted and covered in cobwebs. But Phil pressed himself right up against the spiderwebs and dirt, before he grabbed Wilbur and pulled him to his chest.

"The more under the slide we are, the better protected we are from any falling debris," Phil whispered to Wilbur, wrapping his arms tightly around his shoulders and tucking Wilbur's head under his chin.

For a moment, Wilbur was confused as to why Phil was wrapping himself around Wilbur like a spider trying to cocoon her prey in silk. But then, the realization hit him that Phil was trying to use himself as a shield to protect Wilbur, and suddenly the reality of the situation came crashing down on him all at once.

They could die. They were right next to a hero villain fight, and they very well could die in this moment.

Terror bubbled up inside of Wilbur. It clawed at his throat and tugged on his shoulders, as if it was trying to bury him alive. He couldn't breathe. Either he was going to die, or Phil was going to die, or they were both going to die. And if Phil died—oh god, the fear that rocked through Wilbur's entire body imagining Phil laying dead on the ground because he wanted to protect Wilbur—that was some of the worst pain in his chest Wilbur had felt in a long time.

Twisting around in Phil's grip, Wilbur buried his face in the man's shirt as he struggled to catch his breath. It was all just too much. Too much screaming. Too much to try and look out for. Too much going through his head. Just too much too much too much—

“Hey, Wil, I need you to breathe for me,” Phil whispered into his ear, running his hands up and down Wilbur’s back. “You’re gonna pass out if you keep hyperventilating like that.”

“But- But- We’re gonna- We could-”

“Shhhh, Wil, we’re okay,” Phil continued, cutting off Wilbur’s desperate gasps. “We’re safe here. Nothing’s gonna-“ there was another loud crash, and Wilbur shrieked at how close it was to them. “We’re gonna be okay,” Phil continued, although his voice was wavering.

“I don’t wanna die,” Wilbur cried, his voice warped by his tears.

“And you’re not going-“ another crash, “-you’re not going to. I got you, okay? Just breathe, Wil. Try to match your breathing to mine.”

Phil began to take deep, exaggerated breaths. Wilbur felt his chest rising and falling against his forehead, and did his best to try and match the rhythm like Phil told him to. He did his best to focus on that. Just the breathing. Not the crashing sounds, not the deafening screech of metal, not the screams from other people still running to try and escape.

Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. A steady rhythm. Chest up and chest down. Rinse and repeat.

Slowly, the rest of the sounds faded away. All Wilbur could hear was Phil’s breathing along with his own. He could feel Phil using one hand to cradle the back of Wilbur’s head, and the other wrapped tightly around his shoulders. When he took a breath in, Wilbur could smell the overwhelming scent of artificial flowers from Phil’s laundry detergent lingering on his shirt.

Finally, after what felt like years trapped in the span of minutes, Phil pulled away. It was only a little bit of space, but it was enough for Wilbur to realize that he couldn’t hear the sound of screeching metal anymore.

Carefully, Wilbur risked a glance out from under the slide. There was no more metal raining down from the sky, and it seemed like for that time being, the fight had settled down.

“Is it over?” Wilbur whispered, his voice shaky.

“I think it is. But we should wait here a little longer, just in case.”

Wilbur nodded. That made sense to him. He fell back against Phil’s chest again, and went back to counting his breaths, the fear racing through him fading to little more than a buzzing in his head.

Less than a minute passed before Wilbur heard footsteps walking towards their slide. He and Phil both stiffened, with Phil tugging Wilbur close to him again.

There was no voice. Just boots thudding against dirt. Was it the villain? Was he going to hurt them? Could he see them under the slide?

The footsteps came to an abrupt stop right next to the slide. There were a few beats of silence, with Phil’s heart thudding loudly against Wilbur’s back. Then, there was an

unfamiliar woman poking her head under the slide.

“Hello! I thought I saw two people run under here,” the woman said, her long, snow white curls brushing against the dirt. She was wearing a mask that was reminiscent of a sheep, with dark horns curling up and around her temples. “Are you guys okay?”

Wilbur didn’t recognize that mask, or the woman wearing it. She could’ve been a hero, but she could’ve been a villain as well. But why would a villain be checking on them to see if they were alright? Was she teamed with the gingerbread man?

Before Wilbur could worry too much about that though, his eyes caught on a flash of gold attached to the lapel of her jacket. It was a gold badge engraved with a large ‘H’. The mark of the Heroes.

She was a Hero. They were safe.

“We’re okay,” Phil said, smiling gratefully at the hero. “Is it safe for us to come out now?”

The hero nodded. “Yup! The villain’s been detained. Do you need help crawling out?”

Both Phil and Wilbur shook their heads. “No, we’re alright. Wil, you wanna go first?”

Nodding, the hero stepped away from the slide as Wilbur crawled out from under the metal, cringing when a spiderweb brushed against his back. His jeans were stained with mud, and when he got away from the slide, the hero offered her hand to help him to his feet.

Wilbur stumbled a bit once he was standing, and the hero gently grabbed his shoulders to steady him. Then, she reached behind him, and Wilbur realized she was helping Phil up as well.

As soon as they were both standing, Wilbur pressed himself against Phil’s side, mind still spinning from how fast everything had happened.

“Thank you for the help. We heard the fighting stop, but we weren’t sure if it was safe yet or not,” Phil explained, wrapping an arm around Wilbur’s shoulder.

“That’s actually better that you guys waited for someone to come get you. Sometimes things might calm down for a few minutes, but then the villain gets loose or more villains show up and things just go to shit-” the hero cut herself off, eyes widening as she looked at Wilbur.

“Oh god I’m sorry I meant, um, crap. Things go to crap!”

Phil snorted. “Don’t worry, I cuss in front of him all the time. He’s got more of a sailor mouth than I do at this point.”

The hero breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank god, dealing with pissed off parents after fighting a villain is a one way road to a migraine.” Then she met Wilbur’s eyes again and smiled warmly at him. “How old are you, kid?”

“I’m twelve,” Wilbur answered, his voice still rough from his crying earlier. He noticed how the hero had referred to Phil as his parent, and Phil hadn’t spoken up to correct it.

It was probably for the better. This was a hero who would have to call CPS if she suspected anything strange about him. But if she thought Phil was his dad, then he was in the clear until she left.

“Well, then I think you’re plenty old enough to know what shit means,” she said, giving him a conspiratorial smirk. Then she glanced back up to Phil, as if to say something else, but paused as her eyes flickered over his face. She looked between him and Wilbur a few times, before narrowing her eyes. “You know... you look a little young to have a twelve year old.”

Oh shit.

Eyes widening, Phil was silent for a beat, before he forced out an awkward laugh. “Oh, um, he’s adopted.”

The hero made a noise of understanding. “Oh! That’s so cool!” She grinned again, and behind Wilbur, he felt Phil let out a sigh of relief. “You know, I’ve always thought about adoption myself. Obviously not now, but in a few years maybe.”

Phil chuckled again, and this time it sounded much more natural. “I was gonna say, you look even younger than me. You’re a new hero, right?”

The hero nodded. “Yup! You can call me the Captain, I graduated from the Hero Training Program last month!”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Captain,” Phil said, reaching out to shake her hand. “Were you over there fighting that villain?”

“A little bit. I was more just trying to keep debris from hitting civilians while Starman took him down.” As she said this, she held up the metal she had in her hand for emphasis. It looked like it had been fashioned from the metal flying all over the place, but had been reshaped into something resembling a shield.

Then, in the distance, Wilbur heard a man’s voice shout, “Captain, I need you over here!”

The Captain stiffened, and she gave both Phil and Wilbur apologetic looks. “Well, it looks like I gotta go. You two are alright though, right?”

“We’re fine. Thank you for the help, Captain,” Phil said, nodding at her.

“See you guys later!” The Captain waved. Then, she turned around and jogged out of the park, hoisting her giant metal shield along with her with surprising ease.

She disappeared around the corner, leaving Phil and Wilbur alone once again. Wilbur looked around the park, noticing the giant pieces of metal sticking out of the grass, and the car that was half-submerged in the duck pond. A few ducks were swimming around the edges of the car, tapping at the window with their beaks like they were trying to test if it was edible. Through weeks of feeding the ducks, Wilbur had gotten to know the ones that lived in the pond, and was relieved to see all the ones he knew were accounted for.

“Are you alright, Wil?” Phil’s gentle voice startled Wilbur out of his thoughts.

“I’m not hurt,” Wilbur told him, looking up at the man.

“I know you’re not hurt, but I asked if you’re alright,” Phil repeated, squeezing his shoulder. “That was pretty scary, don’t you think?”

Wilbur gulped, and slowly nodded. “That- Yeah, that was scary.” He took a breath to steady himself, and it was then he noticed that Phil’s hand—the one not resting on his shoulder—was shaking. “Are you okay, Phil?”

Something on Phil’s face softened at Wilbur’s question. “Yeah, I’m okay. Just a little shaken up is all.” He let go of Wilbur’s shoulder, hands hovering in the air for a moment, before shoving them in the pockets of his coat. “Sorry about, uh, telling the Captain you were my kid. I thought it would be a little strange to tell a hero that you’re just a random kid I know.”

Wilbur hadn’t minded it at all. Again, it kept any suspicion off of him, so he certainly wasn’t going to argue in front of the Captain.

(And maybe, just maybe, Wilbur couldn’t remember ever having someone who really felt like a dad to him. He once had a mother, but never a father. Hearing Phil say that made Wilbur feel like if he had a dad, he would want him to be like Phil.)

“It’s okay,” Wilbur reassured him.

Phil smiled in obvious relief. He glanced around the park, eyebrows furrowing at the pieces of metal sticking out of the ground, before bringing up a hand to push his hair out of his face. “How about we go to the diner to get a nice, ‘hooray we didn’t die’ lunch?”

Huffing out a weak laugh, Wilbur nodded as his stomach growled at the reminder of food. “That sounds good to me.”

As they left the park, Wilbur shivered when another icy wind blew over them both. Phil ended up putting his arm back around Wilbur’s shoulders to help shield him from the cold, and Wilbur stayed curled into Phil’s side for the entire walk to the diner.

More time passed, but the routine didn’t change. Soon, it had been two months since Wilbur met Phil, and he was still seeing the man nearly every day at the park.

Wilbur was better fed than he’d been in the entirety of the past year. He almost never stole anymore, knowing that he could rely on getting at least one full meal from Phil every day. Maybe he should’ve been more wary, should’ve tried to squirrel away extra food in case Phil ever stopped bringing him stuff to eat, but... he trusted Phil. Probably more than he should’ve.

That was why when Phil stopped showing up to the park, it was like getting smacked in the face.

The first day Phil didn’t show up to the park, Wilbur didn’t think much of it. There had been plenty of times Phil hadn’t been able to stop by, whether because of work or other personal

obligations. He would be back the next day, and apologize for his absence. It was fine. Wilbur could go hungry for a single night.

But then Phil didn't show up the next day either. This was more unusual, but Wilbur tried to think it was just a fluke. Phil must've been really busy, but he would be back tomorrow and apologize ten times over for missing two days in a row. While Wilbur could've tried to steal some bread on the second day, it was also really cold out, and he didn't want to risk his voice not working again. Besides, Phil would be there the next day. He could wait.

The third day Phil didn't show up was when Wilbur started to get worried. Had something happened to Phil? If he had something coming up this week, he would've told Wilbur, right? What if he'd been in an accident? Wilbur had no idea what part of the city Phil even lived in, so it wasn't like he could go try to find him.

That day, Wilbur managed to snatch a bag of chips from a convenience store without being noticed. It wasn't nearly enough to quell the aching pains in his stomach, but it was enough to let him go to sleep.

When Phil didn't show up the fourth day, Wilbur began to wonder if Phil had gotten sick of talking to him. After all, he was just some random kid Phil knew. It wasn't like he had any obligation to actually spend all that time with Wilbur. Maybe he got annoyed with him. Maybe he got tired of Wilbur's ramblings about history. He'd been told he talked too much by past foster parents. Maybe that was why Phil had stopped coming to the park.

The chips had given him enough relief from hunger pangs to sleep, but not much else. He tried to steal a loaf of bread from a bakery, just like he had before, but his voice cracked when he attempted to use it on the baker. In the ensuing chase, Wilbur dropped the bread, and by the time he made it back to his alleyway, his legs were shaking so badly he couldn't even stand anymore.

On the fifth day, Wilbur woke up with an aching body and no intention of going to the park to see if Phil was there. He doubted Phil would show up, and he didn't even think he had the energy to walk all that way. It sucked, because Wilbur had gone this long without food before, but he'd gotten reliant on all the meals Phil provided. It was a foolish move on his part, because here he was, so exhausted that the simple act of sitting up against the wall was nearly impossible.

Except... well, Wilbur ended up digging under the blankets in his tent, and found a plastic sleeve with a few crackers left inside of it. He'd stolen that a few weeks earlier, one of the only things he'd stolen since he started regularly hanging out with Phil. The crackers had long since gone stale, but Wilbur ate them anyway, and the tiny amount of food was enough to get him to his feet.

Wilbur didn't mean to go to the park. He'd gotten up to try and see if he could steal more food from another shop, but it was so hard to think clearly when he was this hungry. In his daze, his feet carried him straight to the park, and when Wilbur realized where he was, he almost started crying at the reminder that Phil had left him. That was stupid. He shouldn't cry over Phil. It's not like they were *that* close or anything.

But he still wanted to cry. His legs had started wobbling again, and he struggled to fight the tears burning behind his eyes as he stared out at the duck pond.

And then, there was a familiar voice behind him.

“Wilbur!”

Turning around, Wilbur saw Phil rushing towards him, looking a bit paler than when he’d last seen the man. He practically collapsed to his knees in front of Wilbur, and Wilbur wasn’t sure if he was about to cry or laugh.

“You left,” Wilbur said, wondering if the reason everything felt so fuzzy was because this was a hallucination, and Phil wasn’t actually there.

“I know, shit, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to just disappear like that,” Phil told him, reaching out as if he wanted to rest his hands on Wilbur’s shoulders like he did regularly now, but wasn’t sure if he was allowed to. “There’s a nasty flu going around work right now, and I ended up getting it. I was so out of it I couldn’t even leave my bed for most of it. Plus, I didn’t wanna come here and get you sick too.”

Phil... was sick?

If he’d just been sick, that meant he hadn’t left Wilbur on purpose. He hadn’t gotten annoyed with him.

“So you don’t hate me?” Wilbur asked in a small voice, his legs shaking violently now from the weight of holding himself up.

Something distraught fell over Phil’s face at the question. “Oh god- is that what you thought? That I didn’t want to hang out with you anymore?” Wilbur nodded, and Phil winced. “No. No, of course not. I could never hate you, Wil.”

Phil didn’t hate him.

Wilbur hadn’t ruined it.

The relief that washed over Wilbur was enough to make his knees buckle. More tears burned behind his eyes, and it made his vision blur.

Wait. The tears weren’t making his vision blur. There were no tears in his eyes.

It was then Wilbur realized that Phil was still talking, but he couldn’t hear what he was saying. Phil’s voice was muffled, covered by a harsh ringing in his ears that blocked out anything else. There was cold sweat forming on the back of his neck, and a part of Wilbur wondered if he was about to throw up because it definitely felt like he was nauseous. Black spots appeared in his vision, dancing across his eyes and growing in size until he could barely make out Phil’s face right in front of his own.

Wilbur fell to the ground, having lost all control of his limbs at this point. Despite his eyes being wide open, everything was dark, and the last thing he was aware of before he passed

out completely was the feeling of warm arms wrapping around him.

Chapter End Notes

DON'T WORRY WILBUR IS OK he just fainted f

we had a few more fun cameos this chapter! Of course I had to throw Puffy in here, at this point in the clinic timeline I'd say she's probably 19, this is quite a few years before she adopts Foolish so she's just a lil baby hero at this point! love my girl! (also for the ages of others, I think Bad is like?? probably 30s? Skeppy is maybe a bit younger like late 20s, and Sapnap is like 8-9 at this point in the story)

also in case you didn't pick up on it, the gingerbread man villain was LazarBeam while Starman the hero was Vikkstar lmaoooo I was like 'who in the dsmp is old enough that they could've been older heroes/villains in this prequel' and then i was like *BOOMERVILLE* so there's your cameo for the two of them

anyway wilbur just went live so gonna dip please leave a comment if you enjoyed I'll probably post the last chapter tomorrow lol

hmu on tumblr and twitter @bonesandthebees

going home

Chapter Summary

Wilbur wakes up in a strange place.

Chapter Notes

hello hello!

here it is, the final chapter of the long awaited siren backstory! I was originally gonna post this yesterday, but then I had something else I wanted to post and I was like eh they can wait a day lmao

anyway here it is! sorry to leave you all on a cliffhanger from the last chapter, but now you can finally find out what happened after wilbur fainted

TWs: more mention of food insecurity and starvation, violence, knife threat, panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur woke up on something soft.

His head was pounding, and his stomach was clenching painfully with hunger. He ran his hands along whatever he was laying on, fingers brushing against soft leather, and wondered where the hell he was.

It wasn't a hospital. He knew what hospitals smelled like, and this place didn't smell like one. Instead, he could smell garlic and tomatoes wafting through the air, making his mouth water and his head swim with the need for food.

After a few seconds of trying to get his bearings, Wilbur blinked his eyes open.

He found himself staring at an unfamiliar ceiling. There was a rickety ceiling fan hanging above his head, looking like it hadn't been used in the past decade at the very least.

As his confusion wore off, Wilbur suddenly realized that he was in a strange place he didn't recognize. A house, it looked like. Someone's house. Wilbur had passed out in the park, and now he didn't know where he was.

Oh no.

The fear that shot through Wilbur's veins was like straight adrenaline. Practically falling off the couch he was laying on, Wilbur stumbled to his feet and whipped his head around to try and see if he could figure out where he was.

He was in a living room. It was a rather plain one, with a scratched up coffee table, a boxy TV, and a plain rug tossed over the floor. Sunlight was still filtering through a window that sat next to the TV, and judging by the sky, it was getting close to sunset.

Suddenly, metal clanged behind him. Heart skipping a beat in his chest, Wilbur whipped his head around, and locked eyes with a startled looking Phil.

There was a kitchen behind the living room. Phil was standing in front of the stove, stirring a wooden spoon in a grey pot. His hair was pulled back into a full ponytail instead of the half one he normally did, and he wasn't wearing his long coat for once.

They stared at each other for a moment. Wilbur could hear the pot on the stove bubbling.

"Hey Wil," Phil said, finally breaking the silence. "You feeling alright?"

Okay, Phil was here. Phil was here which meant that Wilbur wasn't entirely alone in a strange place, but his heart was still racing like a jackrabbit, and his legs had already started shaking again from standing.

"Where am I?" Wilbur asked, his voice much hoarser than he expected it to be.

"My apartment," Phil told him, turning the stove off and putting the wooden spoon down. "You, um, passed out at the park. You didn't seem like you were hurt, and I didn't want to just leave you there, so I decided to bring you back here till you woke up."

As Phil spoke, he'd walked around the kitchen counter so he was properly in the living room, standing only a few feet from Wilbur. He had his hands hovering between them, like he was preparing to grab Wilbur if he passed out again.

"I would've taken you home, but I don't know where you live," Phil continued when Wilbur didn't say anything.

Wilbur winced as he thought back to his pathetic tent. That couch had been one of the softest things he'd laid on in a while, and already he was tempted to collapse onto it and sleep for a hundred years.

Sniffing the air again, Wilbur's stomach growled at the garlic hanging in the air. "Are you cooking?"

Phil chuckled, looking relieved that Wilbur wanted to eat. "Yeah, I am. Figured you might be hungry when you woke up, so I wanted to have something ready for you."

Oh god. *Food.*

"Is it ready?" Wilbur asked, struggling to make himself sound casual about the question.

“It’s just about done. How about you sit on the couch and I’ll come bring you a bowl?” Phil suggested.

Wilbur nodded, nearly falling back down onto the couch as soon as Phil turned his back. His head was still spinning, and his heart was still racing in his chest, but he was a bit calmer now that he knew where he was.

Logically, Wilbur should’ve been more concerned. For all he knew, Phil could’ve figured out he was a runaway and was just trying to keep Wilbur here until CPS showed up. Then Wilbur would be a sitting duck.

But Wilbur tried to reassure himself that wouldn’t happen. They’d known each other for two months now, and Phil hadn’t suspected a thing. Just because Wilbur fainted didn’t mean he’d automatically figure out that Wilbur was living on the streets.

Less than a minute after sitting down, Phil walked back over with something steaming from a green plastic bowl. “Careful, it’s a bit hot,” he told him, placing the bowl into his hands.

Looking down, Wilbur barely even registered the pasta before he was already digging into it. The noodles burnt the inside of his mouth, but Wilbur didn’t care. This was the first real food he’d had in days. He could deal with a bit of pain if it meant he didn’t have to wait.

By the time Phil came back over with his own bowl in hand, Wilbur had almost eaten half of his portion. Phil’s eyes widened when he saw this, and it reminded Wilbur of the first time they’d gone to Bad’s diner together.

“Fucking hell, Wil. When was the last time you ate?” Phil asked in a quiet voice.

Wilbur faltered, another forkful of spaghetti halfway to his mouth. “...this morning.” It technically wasn’t a lie. He’d eaten the stale crackers that morning, although they hadn’t done much for him.

Phil frowned at the answer, but after staring at Wilbur for a few seconds in silence, he went back to eating his food. Taking that as his cue to continue, Wilbur quickly scarfed down the rest of his pasta, and by the time he ate the last noodle, his stomach was aching from the full meal.

Meanwhile, Phil wasn’t even halfway done with his spaghetti. “Do you want seconds?” Phil asked, setting his bowl down.

While Wilbur didn’t want to refuse food, he knew if he ate more, he would just end up puking later. He’d made that mistake before, and it was always worse to lose a meal he’d worked so hard to get instead of pacing himself properly.

“No thank you.”

Phil nodded, moving to pick up his bowl again, but he paused.

He watched Wilbur for a moment, and Wilbur squirmed under his gaze. It was like Phil was trying to figure out how to say something difficult to him, and Wilbur wasn’t sure if he

wanted to hear whatever was about to come out of Phil's mouth next.

"Wilbur," Phil said after a few seconds of waiting, "I'm going to ask you something, and I need you to be honest with me when you answer, okay?"

Wilbur clenched his jaw. Shit. This wasn't going to be good.

When Wilbur stayed silent, Phil took that as his cue to go on.

"Did you faint today because you were hungry?" Phil asked softly, wringing his hands in his lap.

He didn't want to lie to Phil. Wilbur wasn't even sure if he *could* lie right now. Not with his hands shaking as much as they were.

So he stayed quiet and kept his gaze firmly locked on his lap. Phil seemed to take that as an answer in itself.

"Do your parents not feed you, Wil?" Phil pushed, keeping his voice low.

No. No no no. Phil was figuring it out, and he wasn't supposed to figure it out. The only reason Wilbur had let himself spend so much time with Phil was because he didn't know. He hadn't figured it out, and that meant Wilbur was safe. Safe from Phil calling CPS and getting him dragged into one of those group homes to be locked up like a prisoner. But Phil was catching on, which meant Wilbur's luck with him had run out.

The pasta sat heavily in his stomach. He could already feel energy returning to him, and was grateful Phil hadn't asked this until after he'd finished his food.

"Wilbur?"

His time was up. Wilbur leapt to his feet and sprinted to the door he could see sitting at the other end of the living room. Phil yelled something behind him, but Wilbur didn't listen as he yanked the door open, revealing a rather plain hallway.

Without letting himself think twice, he ran out the door and down the right side of the hallway, following the exit signs above his head. He pushed himself to run as fast as he could, nearly throwing himself at the wall when he saw a door with the 'stairwell' label printed across it.

"Wil! Wait!"

Freezing, Wilbur looked down the opposite end of the hall, and saw Phil staring at him.

"I'm sorry," Phil called out, holding his hands up in surrender. "I didn't mean to scare you, but you don't have to leave yet."

Wilbur *did* have to leave though. It was a miracle Phil hadn't called CPS yet, but if he waited any longer, he definitely would. Wilbur wasn't going to just wait around for that to happen.

“Thank you for the pasta,” Wilbur said. And before Phil could respond, Wilbur yanked open the door to the staircase and sprinted inside. He skipped every other step, holding onto the railing for support, and ran until he found himself standing back on the street in front of Phil’s apartment building.

His breath was coming in desperate gasps. Wilbur immediately recognized that he was in a part of Eastside not too far from his own alley. He spared one more glance behind him, worried that Phil might’ve followed him down.

But the doors to the apartment building didn’t swing open, and he hadn’t heard any footsteps behind him when he ran down the stairs.

Phil hadn’t followed him.

Wilbur tried not to think about the way that made his chest ache as he trudged back to his alleyway for the night.

After the fainting incident, Wilbur tried not to go back to the park. He knew he couldn’t risk seeing Phil again. Not when he was so close to figuring Wilbur out.

But old habits were hard to break. It took Wilbur all of three days before he found himself trudging back to the park on a sunny afternoon.

Wilbur had a few rules in place for himself though. If Phil wasn’t alone, he’d run. If Phil tried to grab him, he’d run. If Phil asked him *anything* about his parents or his home life again, he’d run.

Thankfully, Wilbur wasn’t on the verge of fainting this time as he settled himself on the grass in front of the duck pond. Thanks to the pasta Phil had made for him, Wilbur had been able to use his voice to steal another loaf of bread, and had been slowly working his way through it the past few days. It wasn’t as good as Bad’s diner food, or even Phil’s plastic baggie sandwiches, but it kept him from starving, so he couldn’t complain.

As he sat on the slope, digging his fingers into the warm earth and watching the ducks swim in circles on the water, he wondered if Phil was going to show up again. It had been three days since they’d seen each other, and Phil might’ve just assumed Wilbur wasn’t going to come back to the park.

That was what Wilbur should want to happen. If he never saw Phil again, Phil couldn’t call CPS on him. He wouldn’t have to worry about Phil finding out about any of that anymore.

But... Wilbur missed Phil. He hated it, but it was the truth. He’d been dumb and got attached to the nice man who bought him food, liked to feed birds, and knew way more about video games than Wilbur ever would. He let himself think he could trust Phil, that he didn’t have to worry about Phil prying for information Wilbur couldn’t give him.

He was wrong, but Wilbur missed him all the same.

Out of the corner of his eye, Wilbur saw blonde hair pulled back into a low ponytail, and stiffened as Phil sat down next to him on the grass. He left a few feet of space between them, and didn't try to reach out for Wilbur at all. Instead, he just took the plastic bag of birdseed from his pocket, and placed it on the grass between the two of them.

Wilbur waited a few seconds to see if Phil would make a move. When Phil didn't do anything, Wilbur reached for the bag, tugging it open and digging his hand inside to scoop some seeds into his palm.

He tossed the seeds out onto the water. The ducks quacked happily as they dove for their snack.

"I wasn't sure if you'd come back," Phil said after a few seconds, keeping his eyes on the pond.

"I wasn't going to," Wilbur admitted, watching as Phil grabbed his own palmful of birdseed to throw to the ducks.

Wilbur watched two ducks yell at each other over a cluster of seeds. "Why did you come back then?" Phil asked, his voice soft.

One of the ducks snapped at the other. Then, they both dove for the seeds. Wilbur waited for them to fight, but after a few seconds, they both surfaced with beaks full of seeds, swimming side by side like the best of friends.

"I missed you," Wilbur whispered, pulling his knees up to his chest.

Another beat passed as Phil took a shaky breath. "I missed you too," he said, still keeping his gaze fixed on the water. "I'm sorry if I scared you. I just got worried about you."

Of course Wilbur knew Phil was just worried about him. All adults thought they were doing the right thing every time they tried to shove him back in the foster system. None of them could understand that it was better for Wilbur to be away from that place, even if he was hungry and cold a lot of the time. His freedom was worth it.

"You can't ask me stuff like that," Wilbur told him, resting his chin on his knees.

"Can you be more specific? So I know what to avoid?" Phil asked, finally turning to look at him.

"Asking me about my parents, or about food stuff like if I'm eating enough," Wilbur said, turning to rest his cheek on his knee so he could meet Phil's eyes. "Don't ask me where I live either, or—" his breathing hitched, "don't ask me about my powers."

Phil nodded. "Okay. I'll avoid that." He paused then, blinking a few times as he looked back out onto the water. "There's something I want you to know though."

"What is it?"

Another beat. Phil stretched his arm out between them, holding his hand palm up right next to the bag of birdseed. A silent offer.

After a few moments of hesitation, Wilbur placed his hand in Phil's.

"You can trust me. I know you don't think you can, but if you ever need help, or somewhere to go, or just—hell, anything, you can come to me and ask for it. If you don't want me to ask questions, I won't. I just want you to know I'm here for you, Wil."

And god, if it wasn't tempting for Wilbur to tell Phil everything right then and there. He wanted to believe him so badly, it was painful to keep his secrets forced down his throat.

But Wilbur dealt with the pain. He kept his words to himself, and instead just squeezed Phil's hand.

"Okay, Phil," he whispered.

If Phil was a little teary-eyed after that, Wilbur didn't call it out.

Once again, their normal routine resumed. Although there was something shifted in the air between them now.

For one thing, Phil brought him even more food now. Extra sandwiches, bags of chips, protein bars—Wilbur never asked for food, but thanks to Phil, he was always stocked up. Along with that, he was far more careful with his words, often pausing before asking Wilbur a casual question about what he was up to or how his morning was.

He followed Wilbur's request and didn't ask him about food, parents, or where he lived. Wilbur could tell he wanted to, like when Wilbur would show up with hands that were stiff with cold, or when he was yawning every few seconds because he hadn't slept well on the concrete. The questions would dance in Phil's eyes and sit on the tip of his tongue. Wilbur could sense it.

But he didn't ask, and Wilbur was so grateful for that.

Nearly two weeks passed after the fainting incident. Things finally seemed to be back to normal between them, and it was good. Really really good. Spring was finally on its way, and Wilbur was relieved that he would soon be free of nights spent shivering under his thin blankets. The air was heavy with the scent of blossoming flowers, and the sun was back to shining on a regular basis.

Of course, this was when everything had to go to shit.

One day, Phil ended up getting to the park a bit later than usual. He apologized and explained his shift ran long, which had happened before, so Wilbur wasn't surprised. They stayed in the park for roughly an hour when they decided to go to Bad's for an early dinner, and before they left, Bad pressed a bag of three more muffin flavors for Wilbur to taste test.

The sun had long since set by the time they left the diner. Phil insisted on walking Wilbur back at least close to where he lived, and Wilbur figured he could have Phil drop him off a block before his alleyway. It was a risk, but Wilbur *really* didn't like walking the streets alone at night. It was a worthy trade off, in Wilbur's opinion.

The streetlights cast an eerie orange glow on the walls of the buildings as they walked down the sidewalk. Phil was next to the street, with Wilbur on the inside of the pavement. He tried to ignore the way shadows flickered in the corners of his eyes, or how their double footsteps kept making Wilbur think there was someone following them.

Dread had coiled itself tightly around his gut for some reason Wilbur couldn't name. He tried to ignore it as best he could, instead focusing on Phil's rambling about some video game Wilbur didn't understand.

"So, like, if you go to this specific corner of the map and you crouch three times, you can glitch through the border and just run around totally out of range of the other players," Phil was explaining with a wide grin on his face. "It's so fucking funny. Pisses people off so much when you're just taunting them on the other side of the world border and they can't do shit about it."

"Isn't that against the rules?" Wilbur asked, frowning at Phil.

Phil snorted. "Technically, but it's an in-game glitch they haven't fixed yet. It's not hacking. So until the devs fix it, it's free game."

"Can you still attack other players outside the border?"

"That's the beauty of it, you totally can," Phil told him, his smile growing. "You can't do hand to hand or anything, but you can take your gun and—"

Distracted by telling Wilbur about the glitch, Phil didn't see the dark figure step out under the streetlight a few yards in front of them. Wilbur, however, saw it immediately.

"Phil," he whispered, cutting Phil off. "Who is that?"

Words dying in Phil's throat, he froze, eyes going wide when he noticed the shadowy figure that was now walking towards them.

"Wil, stay close to me," Phil whispered, grabbing Wilbur's shoulder and tugging him into his side. He turned on his heel to walk the opposite direction, but Wilbur realized there was another shadowy figure behind them as well.

Wilbur's heart was pounding in his ears as Phil pulled him to the far side of the sidewalk, keeping his head down as the shadowy figure got closer.

It shouldn't have been a surprise, but Wilbur still shrieked when the first dark figure—a burly man in a heavy coat—grabbed Phil and pinned him against the wall.

The second figure darted forward, grabbing Wilbur by the arms and holding him back from running forward to try and help Phil. The muffin bag Wilbur was holding dropped to the

ground, with the man holding him back stepping right on the muffins inside.

“Dad!” Wilbur yelled, squirming in the man’s hold. In his panic, Wilbur didn’t even realize his slip up.

“Wil-“ Phil’s face fell at Wilbur’s terrified voice. “Shit, c’mon, I have my kid with me!” Phil said, grunting as the man pressed him harder against the wall.

“We’re not gonna hurt your kid,” the man holding Phil said. “Just don’t try anything funny, and we’ll all come out of this without a scratch.”

“Don’t- please, don’t hurt Phil!” Wilbur screamed, trying to snap his teeth at the arms of the man holding him. The guy was smart though, and kept his arms out of Wilbur’s reach.

“If you want my money, my wallet is in my back pocket. I only have forty bucks in there though,” Phil said, voice slurred from his cheek being smashed against the brick.

At that, the man holding Phil let go, and Phil slumped against the wall in relief. As he straightened up though, the man dug into his pocket, and Wilbur whimpered when he saw the man pull out a knife.

“Give me the wallet,” the man hissed. “And your phone.”

No. Phil couldn’t give him his wallet. That had all his money and cards and everything in there! And his phone—Phil had told Wilbur how he had to save up for months to get the phone he had now—he couldn’t afford to get it stolen.

“Don’t give it to them!” Wilbur shouted, struggling against the arms holding him back even more.

Phil ignored him, reaching into his pocket for his phone. Wilbur grunted as he tried to yank the man’s arm off of him again, and suddenly, one of the hands let go.

“Stop fucking moving, kid!” The guy shouted, and Wilbur gasped as a sharp pain blossomed in the back of his head.

It wasn’t a bad hit. Wilbur had certainly been smacked harder than that before. But he shrieked in surprise, and that was when everything happened very *very* fast.

“Don’t fucking touch him!” Phil shouted, lunging for the guy holding onto Wilbur.

The other man, the one with the knife, leapt forward to grab Phil. He shoved him against the wall again, much harder this time, and brought the knife up like he was going to stab Phil.

The words slipped out of Wilbur’s mouth without him even thinking about them.

“Let us go!”

Wilbur’s voice echoed with the full force of his powers, pain erupting in his throat at how strong the command was. The effect was immediate. The man holding the knife froze, staring

at Phil blankly for a moment before he took a step back. Wilbur felt the hands on his arms drop, and stumbled to regain his footing as both men stared at them in dazed confusion.

“Phil, cover your ears,” Wilbur ordered. Although Phil looked confused, he lifted his hands to his ears, and Wilbur turned to glare at the two men. *“Drop your weapons, and walk all the way to West End.”*

The command wouldn’t last for the amount of time it would take them to walk to West End, but it would get them far away from Phil and Wilbur.

Neither of the men said anything. A knife dropped to the ground, as did a second knife from the one that had been holding Wilbur. Then, they turned around and started walking in the opposite direction of him and Phil.

Once the two men disappeared around the corner, Wilbur nearly collapsed in relief. That had been close. Way too close.

Wilbur’s relief was short-lived though. After a brief second of pure euphoria that his voice had worked for that, the full realization of what he’d done hit him.

His head whipped towards Phil, who was staring at him in blatant shock.

Phil, who had just heard him command the men mugging them to leave them alone.

Phil, who knew what Wilbur’s powers were now.

Phil, who had just found out how dangerous Wilbur really was.

The panic crashed over him as quickly as the relief did. Wilbur’s heart began to pound as he stared into Phil’s shocked face, practically able to hear Phil’s internal monologue. He thought Wilbur was dangerous. A monster, even. That was what they all thought of him once they found out what he could do. And now Phil, the last person Wilbur had, knew the truth as well.

Phil opened his mouth to speak. Before he could say anything though, Wilbur turned on his heel and sprinted down the street, opposite the direction the muggers went in.

“Wait, Wil! Come back!” Phil called out behind him.

Wilbur didn’t look back. He couldn’t. He *couldn’t*. He had fucked up. There was only one thing more important than making sure Phil didn’t find out he was a runaway, and that was making sure Phil didn’t know about his powers.

But now Phil knew. He knew and he was going to send Wilbur to CPS because he was dangerous. He was dangerous, and too powerful, and he had to just run to get away from Phil.

He sprinted even faster than he had the day he’d woken up in Phil’s apartment. He skidded around a corner, not risking a single glance behind him to see if Phil was following. The

street he was on was easy to recognize, because it wasn't that far from his tent. If he could just hide in there, Phil wouldn't be able to find him.

Above his head, Wilbur heard the flapping of wings. He didn't dare look up to see why birds were following him. Instead, he just focused on not tripping over his own two feet, and kept running.

His legs burned. His lungs screamed. He couldn't stop. Couldn't stop. Couldn't-

It was impossible to breathe, and Wilbur wasn't sure if that was because of the running, or because of his panic. Either way, he gasped for air as he ran, ignoring the way his head was starting to spin from the lack of oxygen.

Finally, he turned the corner to his street. There was more wing flapping a bit behind him, but he didn't bother to look. He just grabbed onto the wall to swing into his alley, all but diving into his tent and curling up as small as he possibly could to try and hide.

His breath was coming in short gasps. The black dots were swirling around his vision again as he clutched his knees to his chest, squeezing his eyes shut as the word *dangerous* played on loop in his mind.

Phil was going to hate him. Phil was going to be scared of him. Phil wasn't going to trust him.

It was all Wilbur's fault. But he had to save Phil! If he hadn't done anything, Phil would've been stabbed!

He should've noticed the guys earlier. He should've insisted to Phil he could've walked alone. It was all his fault. He ruined his own life.

So caught up in his own panic, Wilbur didn't hear the footsteps approaching the alley until a familiar voice called out.

"Wil? I saw you run in here," Phil yelled.

Wilbur bit down on a whimper, trying to press himself as far as he could into the corner between the wall and the dumpster.

Footsteps echoed through the alley. Wilbur was gasping for air, and let out a strangled crying noise when Phil's shoes appeared in front of his tent.

Suddenly, Phil was crouching down, and Wilbur locked eyes with a familiar pair of icy blue ones.

"Oh my god," Phil whispered, staring in horror at Wilbur's tiny tent. "Is- Is this where you live, Wil?"

Oh god, this was it. Phil knew about his powers, and Wilbur had stupidly led him straight to his tent. It was all over. Wilbur couldn't even use his voice to get out of this now, because his throat was far too sore for him to try and use it on Phil.

“I’m sorry,” he gasped out instead, burying his face in his knees. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.”

“Wilbur, you don’t need to be sorry. You didn’t do anything wrong,” Phil told him gently.

Wilbur shook his head. “I-I used my powers to control those guys. My powers aren’t good.”

“If you hadn’t used your powers, we both would’ve gotten hurt,” Phil explained. “You probably saved my life, Wil. How is that bad?”

“I’m dangerous,” Wilbur stuttered between the sobs now wracking his chest.

“Who told you that?” Phil asked, something sharp edging his tone.

“My- My social worker,” Wilbur said, his vision blurred by his tears. “They were- They wanted to put me in a group home. For danger- dangerous kids.”

Understanding dawned across Phil’s face. “You ran away, didn’t you?”

Well, it’s not like there was any point in hiding it now.

Wilbur nodded, and Phil made some kind of wounded noise.

“Can you come out of the tent?” Phil asked, the sharp edge having disappeared from his voice in exchange for something much softer.

Clenching his jaw, Wilbur shook his head. “You’ll call CPS.”

“I’m not gonna call CPS,” Phil immediately said.

Wilbur huffed. Yeah, he’d heard that before.

“Wilbur, can you look at me?”

Reluctantly, Wilbur glanced up through his bangs, and saw Phil looking... honestly, pretty upset.

“Have I ever lied to you?” Phil asked.

Blinking, Wilbur paused to try and think if there was ever a time Phil had lied to him.

He hadn’t always asked the right thing. Sometimes he scared Wilbur when he got too close to finding out the truth. But he never lied.

“No,” Wilbur whispered.

“I’m not lying to you now either. I promise I’m not going to call CPS. Please, just come out of the tent.”

Once again, Wilbur wanted to believe him. He knew he shouldn’t, but what choice did he have? Phil knew everything now. He knew where Wilbur lived. There was nothing to hide anymore.

Taking a shaky breath, Wilbur forced himself to let go of his knees. His body was stiff as he crawled out of the tent, and Phil backed up until Wilbur was sitting less than a foot away from him.

Without saying a word, Phil opened up his arms.

Another sob tore through his chest as Wilbur launched himself into Phil's arms.

When Phil hugged him, he didn't try to grab him so he couldn't get away. He didn't try to pick Wilbur up and drag him away from his tent. Instead, he just held him. Wilbur buried his face in Phil's chest, getting snot and tears all over the soft fabric. And Phil just ran his fingers through Wilbur's hair, shushing him and whispering that he was okay, that he was safe.

And Wilbur cried. He cried and cried and cried, because finally there were no more secrets. Phil knew everything, and Wilbur didn't have to hide anything anymore. He was done tiptoeing around his words and around Phil's worried looks. He was done second guessing every last thing he said and did. It was a physical weight off his shoulders that he hadn't even realized was there.

Eventually, after what felt like hours of crying (but was probably only minutes), Wilbur's tears ran dry. He gave himself a few extra minutes to catch his breath, before he finally lifted his head out of Phil's shirt.

"Hey kiddo," Phil said softly, giving him a small smile. "You've been holding all that in for a while, huh?"

Wilbur opened his mouth to reply, but stopped short when he saw something dark move behind Phil's head. He froze, heart leaping into his throat, before he heard the shuffle of feathers and his eyes caught up with his mind so he could recognize what he was looking at.

Wings. Large, black wings were stretched out behind Phil, and when Wilbur glanced over his shoulder, he saw the wings were wrapped around him like a protective shield.

"You have wings?" Wilbur whispered, his voice hoarse from using his powers earlier.

Phil nodded. "Yup. I can hide them if I need, but that's how I was able to keep up with you when you were running. I was flying above you."

Oh. That's what the strange flapping sound Wilbur kept hearing was.

"That's... That's really cool," Wilbur said, brushing his fingers against one of the glossy, dark feathers.

"Thanks, mate. I like to think they're pretty cool too," Phil chuckled. The wings circled tighter around them, and Wilbur felt like he was being wrapped up in a cocoon. "Your powers are pretty cool too, y'know?"

Wilbur stiffened at the mention of his powers. "My powers aren't cool. I'm dangerous."

Phil frowned. “You’re not dangerous, Wil. You’re a child. Just because you can do something really powerful doesn’t inherently make you dangerous.”

Hiccuping once, Wilbur shook his head. “That’s not what my social worker said.”

“Well fuck your social worker,” Phil said without a second of hesitation. “You’re a good kid, Wilbur. You’re not dangerous.”

Even though there were no more tears left for him to cry, Wilbur’s eyes burned like they wanted to make more tears all the same. “So you’re not afraid of me?”

Shaking his head, Phil tugged him closer to his chest again. “I’m not afraid of you at all. I just feel terrible you’ve been dealing with this alone for so long.”

Burying his face in Phil’s shoulder, Wilbur sniffled. “I’m sorry I lied.”

“You have nothing to apologize for,” Phil said, resting his chin on top of Wilbur’s head. “But I do have something I want to ask you.”

Lifting his head again, Wilbur blinked the tears out of his eyes. “What is it?”

“Will you come stay at my place? I’m not gonna call CPS or anything, but I don’t want you sleeping next to a fucking dumpster anymore.”

He... He was offering for Wilbur to stay at his place?

It was risky. One night Wilbur could go to sleep, and when he woke up, his social worker could be standing at his bed.

But Wilbur wanted to trust Phil.

Wilbur *trusted* Phil.

“Okay,” Wilbur nodded. “I’ll stay with you.”

Phil’s resulting smile nearly blinded Wilbur with how bright it was.

“Let’s go home then.”

Chapter End Notes

and that's the story! happy ending :) from here basically what happened is that after wilbur stayed with phil for a while, phil finally contacted CPS but fought tooth and nail to make sure they didn't take wilbur from him, and got registered to be a foster parent so he was no longer illegally harboring wilbur. after that, he got contacted about fostering another kid with dangerous powers, technoblade, and that's how we got the trio! phil

ends up becoming a villain a few years after this, when wilbur is probably around 14 or 15ish, so there's the timeline for ya

I can't promise I'll write anymore prequels anytime soon, but maybe one day I'll write a one shot from the Soot family trio's early days as villains who knows. could be fun! either way, make sure to subscribe to the series this fic is apart of to stay updated if I ever add more one shots or mini stories like this to the clinic-verse!

also I wanna say thank you to all my readers, but especially everyone on twitter. if the whole sirentwt craze hadn't happened, I wouldn't have written this, so thank you for bringing back a bit of my inspiration for the world of clinic :) and also ty all so much for the amazing fanart you've posted. seriously that like 2 week period where everyone on wilburtwt was obsessed with siren was such a whirlwind and it made me so so happy, so ty guys and I really hope you enjoyed getting to see this little sliver of backstory <3 make sure to use the tag #tommyinnitsclinicforsupervillains on twitter if you post any fanart! and please @ me as well, i love seeing your stuff!

in case you didn't know, I have a discord server! go scream about siren to your heart's content over there <https://discord.gg/HF4z3SqUgE>

there's an official playlist for clinic! go check it out [here](#)

please let me know what you thought down in the comments below, I don't respond to most but I read them all and they really make my day <3 also be sure to check out my other works, I have another ongoing superhero au (completely unrelated to the clinic-verse) with a bit of a darker, more serious tone so go check out [the world forgetting by the world forgot](#)

hmu on tumblr and twitter @bonesandthebees

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!